AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the present title with the following rewritten title:

~~COMPOSITIONS AND METHODS INVOLVING AN ESSENTIAL STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS GENE AND ITS ENCODED PROTEIN STAAU_R9~~

FRAGMENTS AND VARIANTS OF STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS DNAG PRIMASE, AND USES THEREOF

At page 101, please replace the paragraph encompassing lines 16-27 with the following paragraph:

The candidate protein PT72 was excised from SDS-PAGE gels and prepared for tryptic peptide mass determination by MALDI-ToF mass spectrometry. [Qin, J., *et al.* (1997) *Anal. Chem.* 69, 3995-4001]. As exemplified in Fig. 6, high quality mass spectra were obtained. The PT72 proteins observed in the two affinity chromatography experiments (eluates presented in Figs. 4 and 5) were identical as determined by the masses of the tryptic peptides. The gel slice containing PT72 was found to contain a single protein. The PT72 band was identified as an open reading frame (herein referred as 'STAAU_R9') found in Contig 286 of the University of Oklahoma genome sequencing project database ~~(http://www.genome.ou.edu/staph.html)~~. PT72 is highly similar, although not identical, to *S. aureus* DnaG (gil|2494147|sp|O05338|PRIM_STAAU DNA PRIMASE, gil|1943994|dbj|BAA19493.1| (AB001896).